

6,940 Took Drugs; Army Still Testing

By Bill Richards

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A top civilian drug researcher for the Army said yesterday a total of 6,940 servicemen have been involved in chemical and drug experiments run by the Army and that the tests are still going on at Edgewood Arsenal in north-east Maryland.

Dr. Van Sim, civilian medical director at the Edgewood Arsenal and head of the research program, said he

those involved in the program to the House Armed Services Committee and to military officials yesterday.

Sim said the testing of LSD was halted by the Army in 1967 but that some two dozen other drugs—ranging from alcohol to hallucinogens—have continued to be used in tests on servicemen at the facility.

"We have a program and it is continuing," Sim said. "We are testing all types of drugs and chemicals and will continue to do so because it is important to the national security of this country."

Sim's statement is the first acknowledgement that Army testing of drugs on humans is still going on. The National Research Act of 1974, which prohibits some types of human experimentation with drugs by government agencies, does not apply to the military.

A spokesman for the Army declined to comment on Sim's figures and said a complete tally of all those involved in drug experiments is being compiled. Last Friday the Army said it had tested LSD on nearly 1,500 civilians and servicemen between 1956 and 1967, when the LSD tests were halted. There was no mention of the announcement of any other type of drug testing.

Sim, who has been in charge of the civilian side of the research at Edgewood since 1955, said some of the servicemen on his list may have been involved in only minor types of exposure to chemicals and drugs, such as that involved in testing gas masks.

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In addition to LSD, the Army has tested substances such as anticholinergics, a family of drugs that includes powerful hallucinogens, alcohol, phenobarbital (a barbiturate), and the sleep-inducing drugs secenal and nembutal on volunteer servicemen in experiments since the mid 1950s, Sim said.

He said all the military volunteers have signed releases provided by the Army and all were told about the effects of the drugs they would be given.

Two former servicemen who said they believed they might have suffered aftereffects from the Army's drug tests disagreed with Sim yesterday.

William Jordan, a former Army colonel who was one of 34 young officers given LSD during an experiment at Ft. Benning, Ga., in 1960, said neither he nor any of the others in his groups was told of possible aftereffects from the hallucinogen.

In the months following the LSD experiment, the 47-year-old retired officer said, he experienced the first in a series of epileptic seizures and other "flashback" effects from what he says he now believes

was his exposure to the drug.

Jordan, who is now married and has three children, lives in Pensacola, Fla. He said a military doctor advised him to have no more children because of his exposure to LSD. At his retirement in 1972 his medical record contained the notation "epilepsy with anxiety reaction" and he received a 30 per cent disability from the Army.

"I was never sure that the epilepsy had anything to do with the LSD tests," he said, "and I'm still not sure. But they never even told us there would be any aftereffects and no one bothered to check."

It was Jordan's own research just before his retirement that persuaded the Army surgeon general's office to open a follow-up examination on all the men in the Georgia experiment. The tests are not yet complete, the Army said last week.

Jordan's allegation was repeated yesterday by a former Air Force staff sergeant who was part of an LSD experiment at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland in 1957. The sergeant, now retired and living in Fairfax, asked that his name not be used.

He said he had confirmed through the surgeon general's office that he was one of the

servicemen tested in the LSD research and he still has the certificate of appreciation given to all 24 members of his test group after they finished the course.

For two years following the LSD experiments, he said, he experienced deep depressions, sometimes broke down in tears in front of his family, found himself deep in moody silences and once contemplated suicide during the height of his depression.

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"It was a hell of a time," he said. "Before the experiment I was a happy-go-lucky guy and then these weird things started to happen. I couldn't figure out what was going on. No one ever told us anything about those tests except that they said right before we drank the LSD that we'd get a little high like you do when you drink."

The man still has a copy of the letter of commendation, signed by Col. Albert L. Dreishbach, the director of medical research at Aberdeen at the time. "You are hereby commended for exposing yourself to experiments above and beyond the call of duty," the commendation reads. "Your performance and behavior are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service."

Like others who took part in drug experiments run by the Army, the former Air Force sergeant said, he was told not to reveal his part in the tests because they were classified and disclosure would violate national security.

An Air Force spokesman said yesterday that he had no information on how many others from the Air Force took part in the experiments with LSD and other drugs.

An order issued by the Army in April, 1957, however, states that 50 volunteers from the Army were needed each month for tests at Edgewood Arsenal. An additional 20 volunteers were to be supplied monthly by other service branches, according to the memo.